

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, ECON, IT
SUBJECT: VISIT TO CATANIA AND SIRACUSA

1. SUMMARY: THE ONSET OF "MAFIA-TYPE" CRIME IN CATANIA, DEMILITARIZATION AND UNIONIZATION OF THE PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES WERE THE MAIN CONCERNS EXPRESSED TO US BY SENIOR AUTHORITIES (PREFECTS, POLICE OFFICIALS) DURING A MARCH 15-18 VISIT TO THE PROVINCES OF CATANIA AND SIRACUSA. UNEMPLOYMENT (PARTICULARLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE); LACK OF INVESTMENT; DISENCHANTMENT WITH HIGH-POLLUTION, LOW-EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRY; AND CONCERN ABOUT THE POLITICAL FUTURE WERE MAIN FEATURES OF CONVERSATIONS WITH POLITICIANS AND JOURNALISTS. IN SIRACUSA, PERSONALITY AND OTHER FACTORS HAVE PROMPTED SOCIALISTS TO PUSH FOR PCI PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. DC SEEMS UNITED INRESISTING ANY FURTHER CONCESSIONS TO PCI. AMERICAN-OWNED FIRMS IN AREA SEEM REASONABLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PAST PERFORMANCE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MARCH 15 - 18 VISIT TO CATANIA AND SIRACUSA, I MET WITH SENIOR CIVIL OFFICIALS AND WITH LOCAL POLITICAL, BUSINESS AND MEDIA LEADERS. WE ALSO VISITED
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U.S.-OWNED INDUSTRY IN SICILY WHICH IS CONCENTRATED IN THESE TWO PROVINCES.

3. THE NEW PREFECT OF CATANIA, DR. SAVERIO CARRUBBA, CAME TO SICILY FROM ASSIGNMENT IN ROME AS VICE CHIEF OF NATIONAL POLICE. CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM AND WITH QUESTRUA OFFICIALS IN CATANIA AND SIRACUSA FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON CRIME RISE AND

ON CONCERNS ABOUT POLICE UNIONIZATION. OFFICIALS NOTED THAT CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES IN CATANIA PROVINCE WERE FOR FIRST TIME ADOPTING MAFIA CHARACTERISTICS HISTORICALLY PREVALENT ONLY IN WESTERN SICILY AND CALABRIA. ON OTHER HAND, FORMS OF URBAN GUERRILLA WARFARE ARE LONG WAY FROM BEING POLICE PROBLEMS THEY ARE IN ROME AND NORTHERN ITALY. POLICE OFFICIALS IN BOTH CITIES, LIKE THOSE WE HAVE TALKED WITH IN OTHER SICILIAN CITIES, ARE FIERCELY OPPOSED TO CURRENT EFFORTS TO UNIONIZE PUBLIC SECURITY POLICE AND TO REFORMS WHICH WOULD DEMILITARIZE POLICE COMMAND STRUCTURE. LOCAL QUESTORE BELIEVED UNIONIZATION HAD LITTLE SUPPORT AMONG LOWER RANKS AND THAT LATTER SHARED SENIOR CONCERNS ABOUT LACK OF PROPER LEGAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT WHICH POLICE BELIEVE THEY NEED TO COUNTER CRIME AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE. LOCAL OFFICIALS SUGGESTED THAT, UNLIKE PUBLIC SECURITY POLICE, CARABINIERI SEEMED EXEMPT FROM CURRENT REFORM PRESSURES.

4. WHILE FULL CENTER-LEFT GIUNTA GOVERNS CITY OF CATANIA (WITH PCI AGREEMENT ON PROGRAM), CITY AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS IN SIRACUSA HAVE RECENTLY RESIGNED DUE TO PSI INSISTENCE. THAT PCI BE BROUGHT INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT. THE LCOAL DC, MORE STRONGLY UNITED THAN ELSEWHERE IN SICILY, HAS ROUNDLY REJECTED PSI DEMAND, PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR WHICH WAS FEUD AMONG SOCIALISTS THEMSELVES. MAYOR OF SIRACUSA IS SANGUINE ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR TACKING TOGETHER ANOTHER CENTER-LEFT GOVERNMENT AND , BY THE NUMBER, COULD EASILY RULE WITHOUT PBVANNTA. IF NECESSARY , VOTES OF BREAKAWAY DEMOCRAZIA
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NAZIONALE MIGHT ALSO BE AVAILABLE. IN ANY EVENT, DC HOPES DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS OF DN WILL BE ACCEPTABLE TO OTHERS IN "CONSTITUTIONAL ARC". IN COMMENTS ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, LOCAL POLITICIANS SAW NO ALTERNATIVE TO CURRENT GOVERNING FORMULA OR LEADERSHIP. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS BELIEVED "CONFRONTO" WITH PCI HAD GONE AS FAR AS IT SHOULD GO AT BOTH NATIONAL AND LCOAL LEVELS, AND HAD VERY UNGENEROUS WRDS FOR SOCIALISTS. ADDITIONAL INTERESTING FEATURE OF POLITICAL CONVERSATIONS WAS DC RESPECT FOR HOW PCI HAD PERFORMED UNDER VARIOUS FORMS OF LOCAL-LEVEL "CONFRONTO". RIGHT BELOW SURFACE, HOWEVER, WAS CONTINUING CONCERN ABOUT PCI'S CREDIBILITY AS PLURALIST, DEMOCRATIC FORCE. LOCAL JOURNALIST TOLD US SUCH DOUBTS WERE PREVALENT IN OLDER POLITICAL GENERATION, MUCH LESS SO AMONG POLITICALLY ACTIVE YOUTH.

5. TRAVEL PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT U.S.-OWNED INDUSTRY IN BOTH PROVINCES FROM ESSO'S QUARTER-BILLION DOLLAR

REFINERY NEAR SIRACUSA TO SMALLER FIRMS NEAR CATANIA.
ESSO REPEATED COMPANY LINE THAT IT INTENDS TO REMIAN IN
ITALIAN MARKET AND LOCAL MANAGEMENT SEEMED HEARTENED BY
INDICATIONS THAT OIL COMPANIES WOULD SOON GET RELIEF THAT
WOULD REDUCE RECENT LOSSES. WITH 600 EMPLOYEES, ESSO IS
ONE OF MAJOR EMPLOYERS IN PROVINCE OF SIRACUSA AND HAS
RECENTLY MADE SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN LUBRICATING-OIL
PLANT, AUTOMATION AND ANTI-POLLUTION EQUIPMENT.
PLANT MANAGEMENT DESCRIBES LABOR SITUATION AS SATISFACTORY
WITH ABSENTEEISM AT 4 PERCENT-CLOSE TO U.S. RATES.

4. OF SMALLER FIRMS, AMERICAN CYANAMID'S PHARMACEUTICAL
PLANT HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION OF MODERN RESEARCH
LABORATORY, HAS FURTHER EXPANSION PLANS,
TURNED A SATISFACTORY PROFIT, AND DESCRIBES LABOR
SITUATION IN POSITIVE TERMS. ALTHOUGH OTHERWISE
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE, CATANIA PLANT OF INTERNATIONAL
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PAPER COMPANY WAS ONLY U.S. FIRM TO WHICH WE TALKED THAT
HAD PRONOUNCED LABOR DIFFICULTIES. ABSENTEEISM RAN AT
18 PERCENT. STRIKES BOTH REGULAR AND WILDCAT, ARE
FREQUENT AND MANAGEMENT DESCRIBES ITS RELATIONSHIPS
WITH LABOR AS TENSE. MANAGMENT ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT
COMPANY HAD RECENTLY ADOPTED "GET TOUGH" POLICY WITH
WORKERS AND UNIONS WHICH, THEY FELT, HAD YIELDED
PROMISING REULTS. COLLINS

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